/137 cont./

000 If every human soul is invisible, that of the Indian constitutes a mystery. Those who have lived with them for decades and thought they knew the individuals in depth have surprises that are not infrequent.

To be human as he is, the native naturally presents good and bad qualities, like any other human being, some of them taking a color or relief that the environment of deprivation and isolation facilitates and that for this reason stand out more to the eyes of the civilized man who visits them. We shall point out in the following some quite general ones, which for this reason seem to characterize the native mentality and education, admitting that there could be some very rare exception.

1) Intellectual and physical slowness.

• 153 On the one hand, the material life to which they are forced and, on the other, the almost asphyxiating subjection to the tribal laws, which do not allow /138/ discussion, do not leave any room for speculation or, let us say, for the exercise of the [872] theoretical intelligence. This is proved by their difficulty in learning a religious truth and that of the school child in solving the simplest arithmetic problem. For the totality of the school children, the five or six years of studies in the boarding-school regime are not enough for them to be able to learn the four [481] operations. The Indian, just as he is slow in movement physically (2),

> 2. Perhaps, studied under the bio-physiological aspect, this slowness could be partially corrected by an adequate dietary regimen. They are certainly receiving some correction, more psychological in nature, during the years that they spend in the Mission, especially the students in the boarding schools.

is also slow in giving us the most obvious response. Slow in understanding an order we give him, he encounters difficulty in following our reasoning when we talk with him. Ordinarily

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153 it is necessary to repeat the teachings many times. Perhaps it is for this reason that there are so many repetitions in the conversations among themselves.

How much patience and time one needs to obtain from the native a vocabulary as simple as it can be, for example, half a dozen of words corresponding to the parts of the body (head, hand, arm, leg, foot), or the names that they give the various tribes. And this even when we make use of a language that they know (for instance, Portuguese, Nheengatú, or Tukano). The difficulty grows excessive when one wants the term corresponding to some object that we do not have at the time, or [124] when the idea is more abstract. By way of example and confirmation, if we ask him the words of his language that correspond to cadaver, large (space), long (time), ultimate (in an enumeration) (3).

3. By way of confirmation, two episodes are sufficient. We already had the names of the subdivisions of the Taryana tribe, obtained directly by us on a previous excursion and by Pe. Antônio Giacone. Wishing verification, we met in conference six individuals from this tribe, five of whom understood Portuguese sufficiently, and the oldest one, a little less. Two hours were necessary in order to obtain the names of the 15 subdivisions that appear in this work (IV, 2, y /see IV, 2, z, pp. 171 ff./) and the [192] locality where they live. On another occasion we wanted to ascertain the exact pronunciation of nê'kã-yuse (cf. below VII, 4, f (2)), the little branch, broken and "blown," that is left on the road as a malefice for someone. We asked in a circle of six or eight young men who spoke Portuguese. They rapidly exchanged ideas among themselves in

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/footnote 3 cont./ the Tukano language: first one would talk, then another, then two or more simultaneously, and afterwards all remained silent. We would first press this one, then that one, who seemed to understand our wishes. Only after we had opened the typed originals of the present work and the most unrestrained of them had read the excerpt that I was referring to did he add: "that is the way it is." In order to solve this simple question, 40 minutes went by!

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* [192]
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Properly speaking there is no term in the Tukano idiom equivalent to the word /139/ ultimate; they would say, more concretely: the one of the end, the one of the extremity (yaxpa-ti-kãgõ masc., yaxpa-ti-kãgõ, fem., yaxpa-ti-kãra, pl., yaxpa-ti-kãse, neuter).

For this reason one must not be content, insofar as possible, to obtain the translation of a word from only one individual or on only one occasion. Many times the word is heard pronounced differently. Is it a matter of faulty pronunciation by the individual? By which one of them? By all? Or is the divergence due to regional pronunciations? And then which of them will be the best? Or, finally, is it a matter of terms corresponding to a similar Portuguese word? Which of them would be the best? Would they be perfect synonyms? We point out these difficulties in order for one to understand the efforts of anybne who decides to study directly with the Indian the language of the latter. It is ten times more difficult than to study a foreign idiom with the help of teachers, grammars, and vocabularies.

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The Indian is a man of reality, hence his difficulty with generalizations and abstractions. Instead of saying simply and abstractly head, he will prefer to say "my head, your head," etc. He does not say: to work, to eat (the Tukano language does not even have the infinitive form). He will say: "I work, you eat," etc.

/139 cont./

• 153 As for the memory, he has one a little more awake for the subjects that interest him. Thus he has less difficulty in learning some words or sentences of the Portuguese language, or in reading (4)

[125]

> 4. In 1948 I took to the Museu Salesiano do Índio de S. Paulo /Salesian Museum of the Indian in São Paulo/ the written tests of the children of Pari-cachoeira, after only eight months of school, consisting of a short dictation executed with good penmanship and few mistakes.

and in retaining the names of places, of persons, or in recalling the events. With more difficulty he will learn by heart the arithmetic tables or the prayers. And he also feels happy when the civilized man reminds him of some episode in which the Indian took part. Later, the desire to become "white," that is, to become civilized, moves him. For this reason he adjusts to the great sacrifice of entering a boarding school and attending classes, as well as of subjecting himself to the school discipline.

[829]
[872]

2) Practical intelligence.

As for the practical intelligence, it is more highly developed. This is proved by the practical solution of the problems that life presents to him, and with the resources that nature makes available to him. The civilized in those regions, when they do not have other resources available, end up, in certain things, imitating the Indian, or entrusting him with the execution of what is needed. It is enough to point out, for example, the solid and large house /140/ or maloca that he builds, the stable and rapid canoe that he makes, and the numerous objects that he manufactures (vessels, grater, baskets).

/143/

153 4) Spirit of imitation.

His inventive spirit seems entirely atrophied, in favor of the highly developed spirit of imitation. The Indian does not invent; he does as he has learned, without improvement. Just as he is also incapable of copying an original, without the help of someone who will teach him. They are accustomed at present to acquire straw hats made in Santarém (State of Pará). We summoned one Indian, a skilled maker of sieves, tipitís /manioc presses/, and other plaited work, in the act of buying one of these hats: "Don't you have straw in the forest?" -- "Yes, we do." -- "And so, instead of buying it, why don't you make your hat?" -- "Nobody has taught us," was the answer.

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His high conception of the "white" (it is thus that they denominate the civilized, whatever the color of his pigment might be) makes the man from the forest imitate him in everything. And he does it with encouraging results; for example, in the construction of the house with window and portico, and even in the cut of a woman's dress. Hence he easily and spontaneously abandons certain practices of his culture and his objects (hammocks, pots, stove, etc.) for the ones of our civilization, although they remain wedded to their beliefs and customs.

177 829 [342] [291]

/144/ 153 5) Spirit of observation and criticism.

The Indian is an observer of logical and perspicacious spirit. He deduces his conclusions, draws inferences from what he has seen and heard, and soon he expresses them to his tribal brothers. The civilized man has innumerable proofs that he is being observed with a great deal of attention and judged with strictness, even when the forest dweller seems indifferent and does not look. Not infrequently the observations that he makes are humorous and even sarcastic.

551 They greatly like to use ridiculous nicknames. For this a similarity or an episode is enough. And they do this not only to their own companions, but to everyone, without the person's age or desert meriting consideration. It is also a relief against

/144 cont./

551 *[192] the civilized, who, they can be sure, already at the first presentation, receive a nickname, which will be propagated with incredible speed (8).

8. They told us of some of these nicknames: one they called sõãgõ, vermilion, because of his color; another, subí, curled, because he had curly hair; a third one, uxpíka-ro, crooked teeth; a fourth one, o'mẽpero-ro, big ears; a fifth one, waú, the uáia-piçá monkey; a sixth one, õxsó-boekhõ, arrow of alligator (because of being tall and thin), etc. Koch Grünberg (Zwei Iahre, p. 206) tells that they nicknamed him wãx'tĩ (see VII-4, d (5)), because of the beard (?), and his companion Schmidt, nõ'myó-axké, monkey-woman.

6) Curiosity.

• 153 203 Endowed with great curiosity, he wants to learn from any civilized person to whom he is introduced who he is, what his name is, where he comes from, where he is headed, what he came to do, what his nationality is; and they ask their tribal brothers who are accompanying the unknown visitor a thousand other questions. An Indian is apt to make a long and uncomfortable journey in order to tell those of another povoado an episode that happened, the visit of a new missionary, etc. (9). [797]

9. In July of 1956 His Excellency the Coadjutor Bishop of the Prelacy of the Rio Negro, Dom José Domitrovitsch, decided to surprise the missionaries of Parí-cachoeira (river Tiquié), and he was covering the 300 kilometers that separate Parí from Taracuá with a small motorboat. He stayed overnight in the povoado of S. João, about 30 kilometers from the Mission. An Indian, in the middle of the night, set out

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/footnote 9 cont./ traveling in his canoe and at six o'clock in the morning informed the Missionaries of the visit of the Bishop, who is festively received at the Mission two hours later. Humorously one says that in these latitudes there is not yet wireless telegraph, but the communication system of radio-cipó is well developed.

153 If one opens a suitcase, a book, a notebook, the Indian's eye does not leave these objects. And many times he wants to have a more practical and complete knowledge, approaching them, touching them, and /145/ observing them in all their aspects. And not rarely subjecting them to observation by all the senses: he touches, smells, bites. The civilized man realizes that he is being furtively touched on his clothes, or even on the hand, by the children and even by the women. We were not able to verify whether in this gesture some magic concept might also enter.

When he hears Portuguese being spoken, if he does not understand it, he likes to repeat the sounds that he heard, pronouncing them several times, as if to engrave them in his memory.

7) Distrust.

829 Conversely, he does not like to be observed. If he perceives that he is, he withdraws. He answers the civilized laconically, going away as soon as possible, in order to avoid a new question; or he will leave without answering. He spends entire hours of travel in silence in a canoe when he travels alone with some civilized man, or even when he travels with others from the tribe, but in the presence of a "white." It is the mistrust (10)

[123]

10. We were lucky in getting Indians of both sexes, from diverse tribes and in different localities, to unbosom themselves confidentially

4: Silva--368 M-4,5 (1947-1958) 1962 SQ19 Tucano SQ19

Chapter VII

Spiritual Culture

000 Man is always the rational animal, and proofs of his rational nature are innumerable and appear at every moment. But also true is the primum vívere, deínde philosophári, that is, one can only speculate after the pressing material needs have been satisfied. The intelligence needs a favorable environment in order to develop; but, even in the most adverse environment, it will always give manifestations of its presence. And these manifestations are many, which entitles us to say that, in a general way, the Indian is intelligent. The relative ease with which he adapts himself to our civilization, with which he learns and speaks several native languages and some ideas from the Portuguese that is taught him in the schools, the perspicacity with which he observes the white, listens to him, and talks to him, are proofs of our assertion concerning his intelligence. Up to now, however, no native from the Uaupés has acquired a secondary or higher education, nor has he shown an interest in acquiring it, in spite of the stimuli offered by the Salesian Missions (1).

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1. The Salesians count among their members, in the position of Coadjutor Brother, a Taryana Indian with an education higher than a primary one and who is a good teacher of tailoring, with a specialization course in Recife. The Montfortian Padres have recruited for their Instituto two Indians, a Desana and a Taryana. Young women of different tribes are found at present (1958) in Manaus, taking the course in nursing, supported by the Salesian Missions.

The failure of the first attempts is not surprising, because education assumes a civilization, that is, habits of life, of studies, which only a second or third native generation, raised in the civilized regimen, will be able to present.

4: Silva--373 M-4,5 (1947-1958) 1962 SQ19 Tucano SQ19

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/footnote 7 cont./ had gone about four hundred meters, a characteristic cry, which seemed to us more like the chirping of some bird, was heard. The Tukano who came along with us as oarsmen interpreted at once: "It is the tuxaua who is calling in order to return the machete." Truly the tuxaua was waiting for us with the machete, which was returned to its legitimate owner.

On several occasions, as we navigated the headwaters of the rivers or the igarapés, Indians who were in the interior of the forest and heard the noise of the oars exchanged whistles with our oarsmen, who afterwards would give us detailed information: who they were, if they were hunting, picking fruits, looking for caraná, or cutting lumber. It is to be noted that we never heard the Indian humming his songs or whistling for mere diversion.

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/256/ 2. Sciences.

a) Geography -- Topography.

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Their geographic notions of the region are not very numerous, but they are accurate. It is difficult to distinguish what they know through individual experience, through tribal tradition, or through the influence of the civilized whom they consult, because, endowed with an excellent memory, they retain the information that they receive, like that which they learn visually.